

*Legislation Calls to Reinvest in America*

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WASHINGTON, DC—Today U.S. Representatives William Delahunt (D-MA) and Peter DeFazio (D-OR) joined U.S. Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) at a press conference to introduce the American Parity Act of 2005. This legislation will balance the nation's investments in health care, education, public safety and other domestic priorities with any future spending on post-war reconstruction of Iraq.

"The American people have been very generous in rebuilding Iraq," said Emanuel. "We cannot deny Americans the same dreams – of affordable health care, of a quality education, of a safe place to live – that we have promised to Iraq."

The American Parity Act will provides "parity" for American families by ensuring that they receive the same funding that Iraqi families benefited from in the FY 2003, FY2004, and FY2005 Supplemental Appropriations Acts. The act authorizes the Secretary of the Treasury to allocate funding to state and local governments to invest in their infrastructure. Furthermore, the legislation directs the Secretary of the Treasury to give priority to primary, secondary, and higher education, including school renovation; public safety; public health, including hospitals and public health laboratories; social services for the poor and elderly; roads, transportation, and water infrastructure; and housing.

"Not only do we face a massive reconstruction effort on the Gulf Coast, but across the United States, our schools are crumbling, road and bridge repairs are on hold, and energy costs are out of control," Delahunt said. "Because of our invasion of Iraq, we have an obligation to rebuild that country. But it makes no sense to deprive Americans of the same benefits we are giving Iraqis."

"As we saw in the recent disasters," Delahunt concluded, "starving American communities of needed federal support can make the devastation even worse. This legislation will ensure that domestic infrastructure priorities are funded on an equal footing with those in Iraq."

"We're borrowing money to award no-bid contracts to Haliburton for gold-plated reconstruction projects that are absolute failures. At the same time, we're told by the Republican leadership and the White House that we don't have the money to rebuild our infrastructure, schools and healthcare system here at home. The U.S. taxpayers deserve better," said DeFazio.

“We cannot afford our continuing sacrifices and investments in Iraq at the expense of our priorities here at home. As we build new schools in Baghdad, schools across the United States are falling apart. In a time of national crisis and on a day when the House will vote to cut \$50 billion from health care and food stamps, America deserves a better policy. This Administration can and must do better,” said Timothy Bishop (D-NY) who was not at the press conference.

Specifically, Congress appropriated \$2.5 billion in April 2003 and \$18.4 billion in November 2003 for Reconstruction efforts in Iraq. According to USAID, American tax dollars have funded:

#### Health Care

- 110 Primary Health Care Centers built or renovated.
- 2,000 health educators trained.
- 3.2 million children under age five vaccinated.

#### Education

- 2,717 schools rehabilitated.
  - 36,000 secondary school teachers and administrators trained.
  - Hundreds of thousands of desks, chairs, cabinets, chalkboards, and kits for primary and secondary schools distributed countrywide.
  - 84 primary and secondary schools established to serve as “centers of excellence.”
- Teachers will receive six weeks of training, and schools will be equipped with computer and science laboratories.

#### Environment

- \$4 million marshland restoration initiative.
- \$1 billion for potable water.

#### Infrastructure

- Sweet Water Canal system rehabilitated, including repairs of breaches to levees.
- \$520 million to restore potable water and sewage treatment facilities.
- Completed 36 detailed bridge assessments and demolished irreparable sections in preparation for the rehabilitation of three major bridges in Iraq. All three bridges have now been repaired and re-opened to traffic.
- Completed an assessment of over one hundred 1,100 km lengths of track and associated facilities throughout the country to identify priority projects.

#### Community Development/Housing

- 3,120 Community Action Projects.
- More than \$470 million for the construction of housing and public buildings for Iraqi citizens.